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TAGS: OPRC KMDR AF IR RS SZ ZP CH GM
SUBJECT: MEDIA REACTION: AFGHANISTAN, IRAN, RUSSIA, SWITZERLAND,
DUBAI, CHINA, GERMANY; BERLIN

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¶1. Lead Stories Summary

Print media opened with reports on the outcome of a Swiss referendum banning the construction of minarets near mosques. Editorials focused on the conflict between the German states and the federal government on tax cuts and on the outcome of the Swiss referendum.

ZDF-TV's early evening newscast *heute* and ARD-TV's early evening newscast *Tagesschau* opened with the surprising outcome of the referendum in Switzerland.

¶2. (Afghanistan) Upcoming Presidential Speech

Under the headline: "President Obama Feels Increasingly Isolated," *Sueddeutsche Zeitung* (11/30) opined that "important decisions make leaders increasingly isolated. President Obama will have this experience twice in the coming weeks. On Wednesday, he will reveal to the American people that he wants to escalate the war in Afghanistan, and one week later, he will demand of the American people that they break with the American way of life. During the Copenhagen climate summit, Obama will promise that the United States will turn away from a style of living which, on a global scale, is considered a synonym

for ignorant waste and the self-destruction of the planet. More war and improved climate protection, with both decisions Obama will stretch America's forces to the limits. The military rearmament in Afghanistan but also the ecological changes at home - both missions could determine the fate of this president. He can become a great president - or fail."

13. (Iran) Nuclear Conflict

FT Deutschland (11/30) headlined "Iran provokes by new nuclear plants," and reported that "the decision is a harsh provocation and destroys the hope for a compromise in the nuclear conflict. Tehran's announcement is directed particularly against the UN nuclear watchdog IAEA and the so-called group of six." Sueddeutsche (11/28) editorialized: "The group of six that negotiates with Iran in the nuclear dispute is united. Also Moscow and Beijing, which have been protecting Iran in the past, are losing their patience, although it is not clear at all whether they would support sanctions that impress Iran.... The signs are indicating a confrontation.... A way out of the escalating circle is only possible if Iran's leader Ali Khamenei

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accepts the American hand. Unfortunately, nothing indicates that that he will take that hand."

14. (Russia) Train Derailment

All papers carried news reports on the derailment. Sueddeutsche (11/30) reported that "two days after the attack on the a train between Moscow and St. Petersburg traffic on this train route has normalized but the mood in the country continues to be tense President Medvedev called upon Russian to keep calm and added that there should be no chaos. On Sunday, Prime Minister Putin planned to set up a fact-finding commission to investigate the accident."

Tagesspiegel (11/30) headlined: "No Information on Perpetrators," and reported that "police is using all its means to seek the perpetrators," while Die Welt headlined: "Terror Attack in Russia," and Frankfurter Allgemeine reported under the headline: "A country in Shock," and wrote that "following the attack, Russia was shocked and one reason was that there was no clear suspicion of who could have been responsible for the attack On Saturday another shock followed because a second bomb went off near the site of the explosion."

"Attack on Russia's Longing," headlined Sueddeutsche Zeitung (11/30) and judged: "Those who are responsible for the derailment of the Newskij Express train aimed at the mobile, technically versed, active top performers, in other words at the 'new Russia' that President Medvedev has lauded for months. This attack is now hitting the president himself. Now a small, extremely violent group has attacked Russia where it is at its most vulnerable - in its longing for stability."

Frankfurter Allgemeine (11/30) judged: "Russian security agencies are reserved when it comes to suspicions of who could be responsible for

the attack on the express train. One reason could be that two versions of who could be blamed are uncomfortable for the Russian leadership. One was the rumor that Russian right-wing extremists could be responsible while the other one centered on about Muslim extremists from northern Caucasus. The first version would be further evidence of the previous failure of Russia's policy in Chechnya and its neighboring republics. The other one would make it appear extremely odd that the Russian security forces always used toughness and violence against peacefully demonstrating democrats, while they minimized as 'hooliganism' the violence of right-wing extremists despite dozens of killings each year."

"Right-Wing Terror in Russia is Thriving," headlined *Berliner Zeitung* (11/30), which editorialized: "Terror in Northern Caucasus has not declined but it has even expanded to Dagestan and Ingushetia. In the meantime, terrorist activities in Russia have increased in profile.

Right-wing crimes in Russia are on the rise and for a long time

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[Russian authorities] shied away from calling the mob by name. But the Russian security authorities only reluctantly followed tip-offs for nationalist agitators and criminals. One reason might have been that the reference to national unity in the fight against an external enemy would have resulted in even greater support for right-wing extremist groups. But this ugly right-wing face is primarily detrimental to Russia's reputation."

15. (Switzerland) Ban to Build New Minarets

All German media carried prominent reports and many papers had front page editorials on the "surprising" outcome of the Swiss referendum that bans the building of minarets. *ARD-TV's* late night newscast *Tagesthemen* noted that "Switzerland, which is proud of its tolerance, will carry a mark as of today that it will not get rid of for a long time. A surprisingly clear majority of 58 percent voted against building new minarets in Switzerland in the future... The Swiss government now faces the sad result." *Berliner Zeitung* headlined: "The right wing is excited, Muslims are shocked."

Frankfurter Allgemeine wrote in a front-page editorial: "Democratic as you can get, open-minded and tolerant—that's the way the Swiss have always liked to see themselves. The vote in favor of banning building new minarets reveals other sides: narrow-mindedness, timidity and a willingness to cut itself off. The self-proclaimed homeland protectors of the national conservative Swiss People's Party achieved a success that will be a burden for the country in the future. The guessing game on what has led to the change of mind is only getting started... The result should also be a warning to those in Germany who try to minimize the populist factor of referendums."

Sddeutsche editorialized: "The referendum is a catastrophe for Switzerland. You would not find such a building ban anywhere else in

Europe. The six words 'the building of minarets is prohibited' violate not just the freedom of religion and the non-discrimination principle but also the European human rights convention.... The result also causes huge damage to direct democracy.... A storm of outrage will now follow in Muslim world. The worst mistake would be if the Swiss take an even tougher approach now because the heart of the country is open-minded and liberal."

Die Welt highlighted that the "Swiss lapse back into a time before the Enlightenment," saying in a front-page editorial: "The Swiss decision to ban the building of minarets is the wrong response to the right

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question. The questions that move all European societies is how to deal with the growing Muslim minority and their sometimes backward customs, and how we can isolate the small number of Islamic extremists. The response of the referendum is far too simple. The ban of building minarets is not a ban on building mosques, but it throws back Switzerland into a time before the Enlightenment and tolerance, which Europe had worked hard for in the past and which had made the multiethnic Switzerland such a model of success.... The outright ban is a slap into the face of all Muslims in Switzerland.

The referendum shows how deeply rooted the fear of Islam is in Europe and that political elites, not just in Switzerland, have not taken the matter seriously enough."

Mass tabloid Bild opined: "Have intolerance and xenophobia prevailed? This was rather the concern that minarets could one day outnumber church steeples. You could probably expect a similar result in Germany if the people were asked in a referendum because the minaret is not just a symbol of a religion, but that of a whole different culture. Large parts of the Islamic world do not share our European values; the legacy of the Enlightenment, equal rights for men and women, the separation between church and state, rule of law independent from the Bible and Quran... There is another reason for the outcome: nowhere in the world is it so difficult for Christians to live as in Islamic countries. Those who are intolerant themselves must not expect unqualified tolerance."

Spiegel Online remarked in an editorial: "This is a shockingly clear success of far-right politicians... The initiators managed to interpret the controversy over minarets as a symbolic referendum on the influence of Islam. They talked little about minarets and much about the Sharia, burka and the oppression of women in the Islamic world.... This was a virtual debate that had little to do with the Swiss reality because the country with 22 percent foreigners has little problems with the integration of 400,000 Muslims."

16. (Dubai) Financial Crisis

"Returns From Arabian Nights," headlined Sueddeutsche Zeitung (11/28)

argued: "Dubai's Collapse Shows that the Financial Crisis is not yet over." The paper added: "There is no reason to panic. Dubai's neighbors have more oil and their strategies are less risky, and they are able to support their weak brother. The current problems are not monstrous enough to cause a conflagration la Lehman Bros. That is why the recovery from the global economy is likely to continue. But Dubai's repayment problems are a formidable warning sign that the

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financial crisis is by no means over - and what is threatening the global recovery. In Dubai, too much money was available which was invested in risky projects. To a similar extent, other investments or other speculation from the years of the crisis will come to the fore, create damage and delay the return to economic growth. But the disaster in the Gulf will draw attention to the dangers that are looming on a global scale. Now it will become clear what the announcements of the most powerful politicians on earth are worth: to act before the next finance disaster follows. There have not been warnings of smaller and bigger mistakes of various countries. The industrialized nations must quickly implement the ideas that were developed in Pittsburgh and intensify their controls of the financial markets and they should criticize governments which ignore these problems. There is no longer a national economic policy that does not affect other nations. It is human to dream of a paradise in the desert, but it is stupid to stumble from one crisis to the next."

17. (China) Monetary Policy

Under the headline: "Against the Wall," Frankfurter Allgemeine (11/30) argued: "First, the People's Republic of China allowed the U.S. president to run into the wall and now it is [doing the same with] Europe's leadership. Beijing is unwilling to revalue the artificially low Yuan, which makes it more difficult to export goods and to recover from the crisis, while China is winding out of the worst consequences of the crisis. But in the medium-term, there will be no way around it: China will have to revalue its currency. On the one hand, increasing import prices for raw material will increase inflation. On the other hand, China is not interested in postponing the upswing in Europe, and, third, a weak Yuan will make it more difficult to reduce those imbalances that led to the crisis. The Europeans are right: a revaluation is also in China's interest and can be handled during an upswing."

According to Sueddeutsche (11/30), "China will not give in so easily in the conflict about foreign exchange. The Chinese are again giving evidence of their delaying tactics when it comes to the demanded revaluation of their currency. For Europeans and Americans, the waiting for the reform of the Chinese foreign exchange policy has turned into a play of patience. They can only wait and see what will happen because they do not have the means to exert pressure on China to take action. And in the near future, they will have to continue to

play this role. The Communist Party has hardly an interest in a strong Renminbi because this would inevitably result in weaker exports and bankruptcies. The foundation on which China's economic growth is based is shaky. And before this does not change, China will be

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unwilling to eliminate the pegging to the dollar and to leave it to the laws of the market"

18. (Germany) Demjanjuk Trial

Under the headline "The old man and the truth," Frankfurter Rundschau (11/30) reported on the trial against the suspected war criminal Demjanjuk, which is supposed to begin today. "Demjanjuk sees himself as a victim, who has been a prisoner of war. This trial will be a cat and mouse game with delaying tactics and legal subtleties. This is part of the rule of law, and even suspected Nazi criminals can enjoy this right. However, it is undignified." Die Welt editorialized:

"In the trial against Demjanjuk, an autonomous society is passing judgment on a person who knew nothing else but a collective murder policy. First, there was Stalin's starvation policy on Ukraine, and then there was Hitler's terror. The judges want to assess the individual guilt of the accused person in a fair trial. This is not an easy job."

MURPHY